

The listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

LISTING OF CLAIMS

Claims 1-4 (canceled).

Claim 5 (currently amended): An acicular body comprising at least one oxide of at least one metal selected from the group consisting of Group IIIA of the Periodic Table of the Elements, rare earth metals, and mixtures thereof; said acicular body having a polygonal cross section and a cross-sectional dimension less than about 20 μm .

Claim 6 (currently amended): An acicular body comprising at least one oxide of at least one metal selected from the group consisting of scandium, yttrium, lanthanum, thallium, cesium, praseodymium, neodymium, europium, gadolinium, terbium, dysprosium, holmium, erbium, thulium, ytterbium, lutetium, and mixtures thereof; said acicular body having a polygonal cross section and a cross-sectional dimension less than about 20 μm .

Claims 7-31 (canceled).

Claim 32 (currently amended): An acicular body comprising at least one oxide of a metal selected from the group consisting of Group IIIA of the Periodic Table of the Elements, Group IVA of the Periodic Table of the Elements, Group VA of the Periodic Table of the Elements, Group VB of the Periodic Table of the Elements, Group VIB of the Periodic Table of the Elements, Group VIIA of the Periodic Table of the Elements, rare earth metals, and mixtures thereof; said acicular body having a polygonal cross section and a cross-sectional dimension less than about 20 μm .

Claim 33 (currently amended): An acicular body comprising at least one compound of a metal selected from the group consisting of Group IIIA of the Periodic Table of the Elements, Group IVA of the Periodic Table of the Elements, Group VA of the Periodic Table of the Elements, Group VB of the Periodic Table of the Elements, Group VIIA of the Periodic Table of the Elements, rare earth metals, and mixtures thereof; said acicular body having a polygonal cross section and a cross-sectional dimension less than about 20 μm .

Claim 34 (currently amended): An acicular body comprising at least one compound of a rare earth metal; said acicular body having a polygonal cross section and a cross-sectional dimension less than about 20 μm .